

reprisals. These youths present a difficult problem. More strongly than other Italians they defend the prevalent notion that the Italian soldier is the most courageous and the most effective infantryman which any army has produced. There are many stories which bear this out. The most stupefying concerns an Italian officer whose brigade had laid down its arms *en masse* in Africa, after a rattle of Bren-gun fire from one of our platoons. Having resided at Oxford for some years and being able to speak flawless English, he was invited to dine in a mess some fifty minutes after his capture. Here he discoursed on the war in this wise. "You English undoubtedly have the best artillery; the Germans are superior to everybody in their tank arm, while we, of course, have infantry second to none." The experiences of the past hour had apparently been forgotten!

Taking into account this extraordinary view of the war, it is quite comprehensible why the Italians tolerate Allied troops rather than welcome their presence. They feel that these are on Italian soil under false pretences, and this applies especially to the French. "We conquered them, you know, in 1940." There is little hostility to Allied Forces; what there is, vents itself upon those women who, for one reason or another, keep company with the soldiers. In Naples there was a boom in the sale and diffusion of a little broadsheet, written by a street-singer. He parodied a well-known song and sang it in dialect to amused crowds. Cynical and slangy, its appeal to the Neapolitans was instant. The key is struck in the first three lines:—

*Che mala fine faie tu che mala fine
quando se nne vanno americane
rimane cu na vranca e mosche mmane*
What trouble lies ahead of you, what
trouble
When all those fine Americans have
gone
And you alone remain to hold the
baby.

There are many other similar ditties. One day the Italians will realize that they are singing these songs on the stage and selling them on the street without being carted to gaol; when this realization comes they will apply themselves to work of a more constructive nature.

Indeed, the most effective contrast between a town in German-occupied Italy and one in the South is the amount and diversity of the newspapers and other literature. For many months I had read no "free" newspaper at all, other than Allied propaganda leaflets and an occasional issue of *Avanti*, organ of the Communist party on the Adriatic; this was, incidentally, excellently printed and produced, a model effort giving much hard-headed advice. In Naples, however, one may count ten different dailies representing ten different factions on every paper-stall. In March I had a letter from friends in Rome describing how a host of different publishing ventures were in preparation against the day when Rome should be free. Books and pamphlets were being written, edited, and set aside with the printers' contracts tagged to them, ready for a press action on the grand scale. In Naples all bookshops were displaying pamphlets and slim volumes, touching the present and the recent past. The reappearance of a free press and the very full advantage which the Italians are taking of it are the most encouraging aspects of Italy to-day. Although the dailies tend to sycophancy in their references to the Allies, there is the utmost virility in their general tone. The strangest feature of the entire press is the manner in which the war is to all intents ignored. Factionalism, which is not apparent amongst the people, looms monstrosously in the political press, and is concerned almost exclusively with the reconstruction of Italy.

The political situation in Italy is different from that in other countries, where the existence of a faction presupposes some kind of popular support. One obtains the impression, especially in the country, that the politics of a nation are being carried on by a group of professionals who are constantly manœuvring and counter-manœuvring for some indefinite purpose of their own. How far the Socialists, Liberals, Monarchists, and weird partisans of the pre-1920 political chaos have the support of those whom they claim to represent is still a matter to be decided.

At this moment the task of Italian politicians is to educate their people to